DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 187 063 EC 124 328

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TITLE Cross-Categorical Programming for the Language Impaired/Hearing Impaired in a Rural Setting.
PUB DATE Apr 80
NOTE 17p.; Paper presented at the Annual International Convention of The Council for Exceptional Children (58th, Philadelphia, PA, April, 1980, Session W-77).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Education; Exceptional Child Research; Generalization; *Language Acquisition; *Language Handicaps; *Language Skills; *Program Effectiveness; *Transfer of Training

ABSTRACT

A program was developed to provide for generalization training for two groups of language delayed children (N=11), ages 5 to 11, being served in two self contained special education classrooms. The program consisted of three components: teaching the target language construction in a controlled classroom setting, evaluation of language generalization on field experiences, and training parents to conduct language probes for checking language generalization in the home. In summary, the parent probes had two effects. Not only did they give data on the extent of generalization of language, but they positively affected the parents' understanding of language and its importance to their children. The field experiences had a positive effect on the development of language in program children. The cross-categorical nature of the language training was an effective means of language training. (SBH)

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CROSS-CATEGORICAL PROGRAMMING FOR THE LANGUAGE IMPAIRED/ HEARING IMPAIRED IN A RURAL SETTING

Presented at the 58th Annual International Convention of the Council for Exceptional Children

April 23, 1980

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CROSS-CATEGORICAL PROGRAMMING FOR THE LANGUAGE IMPAIRED/
HEARING IMPAIRED IN A RURAL SETTING

Purpose

A key component of language training is the generalization of language skills to spontaneous language. Frequently language programs are implemented in the classroom or clinical setting, with little regard to whether the language skills are being utilized in the child's natural environment. The student indeed may learn and use the target language construction in the classroom, attaining an appropriate degree of mastery to consider the instructional objective passed. The teacher or clinician may record the construction as being completed on the child's individualized education plan (I.E.P.), and may progress along the language continuum in this manner. All too often, however, the process ends here. If the language teacher were to later evaluate the child's spontaneous language to determine if generalization had taken place, no doubt s/he would be disappointed to learn that the child had reverted to inappropriate or immature forms of the construction.

One means of dealing with this problem is to build into the language intervention program methods for training and evaluating the child's long-term maintenance of skills learned in the classroom.

Guess, Sailor, and Baer (1974), deVilliers and deVilliers (1978), and Siegel and Spradlin (1978) have advocated the need for generalization training.

Several authors have specifically included generalization training within the language training program itself. Guess, Sailor, and Baer, (1977), in a language program for severely handicapped students, included suggestions on how to program for generalization within each step of the program.

MacDonald and Blott (1974) provided for generalization by fading imitative cues. The goal was to have the child produce target constructions first through elicited imitation and then in spontaneous conversation.

Other authors have provided for program components designed to evaluate whether the child has transferred learning to the natural environment. Culatta and Horn (1979) taught parents to collect and record language samples in the home setting. This provided clinicians with data on the generalization of skills learned in clinical training.

Evidence suggests that there is a variety of methods for training and evaluating the generalization of language skills. Providing for generalization is a significant factor in helping the teacher assess whether the child has acquired and maintained language constructions in the classroom.

The following program was developed to provide for generalization training for two groups of language delayed children. The authors developed within the language curriculum a three component program for training generalization skills by providing systematic checks of language in different environments. The purpose of the program was to determine if the children generalized learned constructions to spontaneous speech.

Description of the Program

This program was developed and implemented for eleven children, ages 5-11, being served in two self-contained special education classrooms. The classes are housed in an elementary school in a rural setting in Las Cruces, New Mexico. Of these eleven children, four are hearing impaired, and seven have severe communication disorders. All eleven children are considered to be language delayed.

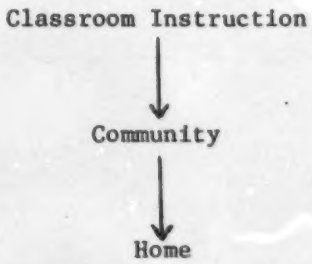
The program consisted of three components:

I. Teaching the target language construction in a controlled classroom setting.

II. Evaluation of language generalization on field experiences.

III. Training parents to conduct language probes for checking language generalization in the home. Ten out of eleven sets of parents agreed to participate in the program. Ten sets of parents were subsequently trained and implemented the procedures described herein.

The components of the program may be represented in this instructional paradigm. Instruction in language was implemented in the classroom. Evaluation checks were obtained in the community and then in the home setting.



I. In the normal course of initiation of a language training program, whether the child is hearing impaired or language delayed with no hearing loss, a specified procedure is followed. The child is first assessed to determine the nature and extent of the language deficit. Once this information is gathered, the teacher determines problem areas and/or a starting point for instruction. An individualized educational plan is then written, specifically tailored for the individual child and his particular language deficit. The teacher, then, determines the method and materials to be used in teaching a particular construction, and sets the instructional objectives to be achieved

during the year's course of language instruction. Furthermore, s/he evaluates whether the child has mastered an objective, and monitors the child's progress along the language continuum.

This procedure was accomplished in this program in a similar manner. The two teachers, along with instructional aids, planned and implemented their respective children's language training programs suited to their respective theoretical bases in language, and tailored to the individual modes of learning of the children. For obvious reasons, instruction for the hearing impaired children consisted of specified techniques. In this setting, a total communication approach is used.

In addition, both groups of children were exposed to controlled vocabulary illustrating seven instructional units: the home, foods, food service, health care for people, health care for animals, cities and protection (fire and police), and plants. The vocabulary of these different units was taught through the child's existing language level. For example, if one child was working on using regular past tense verbs correctly, and the unit currently being covered was fire protection, the child may have been asked to elicit sentences using that vocabulary. e.g. "The man jumped out of the building." or "The fireman sprayed the fire." in response to pictures or verbal stimuli. Consequently, the child not only learned the morphological or syntactical construction, but he learned new vocabulary to be added to his semantic repertoire. Films, books, and other audiovisual media were ordered to correspond with the unit being introduced. Table 1 illustrates the form used to list and teach the controlled vocabulary, as well as the resources available from the district's media center and the school's library. The instructional unit depicted in Table 1 was Cities and Protection.

FIELD EXPERIENCE

Fire station - March

Vocabulary to be developed:

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives
fire truck	protect	dangerous
ladder	squirt	hot
hose	ring	
ax	run	
boots	jump	
hat	crash	
fire department	melt	
fire man	smash	
fire chief		
fire extinguisher		
smoke alarm		
siren		

Audio-visual materials available:

LC - Cities & Protection

FS - The Fireman 618.84

LC - Fireman

SP - 331.7 Peo: People in the Neighborhood

SP 618.84 Bai: Fire Department Helpers

Books:

Fire 536 PA

Fire Engines 614.84 CAM

Fire Engines 614.84 GE

I Want to be a Fireman: 614.84 Gr

Fire Fighting in America: 614.84 Tam

The Fire House Book 614.84 BAI

Fire Engine: Fiction E Gsa

Fire Extinction: Fiction E BEI

The Fire Cat E AV

Country Fireman E BEI

Fire Department History 614.84 Tam

Fire Departments 614.84 Po

Table 1

II. The second component of the program was designed to provide the children with realistic experiences, and to enable teachers to determine whether the construction learned in the classroom generalized to the community setting. To accomplish this objective, seven field experiences were planned to expose the children to the environment. These seven field experiences corresponded with the seven instructional units described in the first component of the program. During these field experiences the children saw, touched, and heard many of the concepts discussed in class. These experiences were captured on film and later shared and discussed in the classroom upon the return of the group. Photographic prints were labeled, discussed, and evaluated by the children in an attempt to stress concepts and to obtain expressive language from the children.

On these field experiences the purpose was to check for language generalization. To do this, each teacher took along on the field experiences a form which detailed the language construction each child had mastered just prior to the field experience. By observing the child, the teacher could determine whether the child was using the construction appropriately. A simple tally of correct and incorrect responses was marked on the form to record the extent of generalization. Table 2 illustrates this generalization check used by the teacher to determine transfer of language skills to a community setting. Upon returning to the classroom, the teacher could mathematically compute accuracy level. The results of the generalization checks will be discussed in the Results section.

GENERALIZATION CHECK

Date:_____

Name of Student:_____

Construction: _____

_____

_____

_____

Observation Time:_____

Correct Responses:_____

Incorrect Responses: _____

Accuracy: _____

Table 2

III. The third component of the program was training parents to conduct language probes in the home setting. To accomplish this, the teachers conducted a comprehensive training session in which the following points were stressed.

Teachers discussed the importance of language and transfer of learning, and described specific language problems. During this part of the training, the parents were introduced to common language problems and asked to identify difficulties by responding to examples of correct and incorrect usage of language. The teachers then demonstrated how language is taught in the classroom. Parents were shown videotape recordings of children working in the classroom to illustrate language training in a classroom setting. Parents were trained in the use of parent probes to check generalization in the home. Prior to the parent meeting, one mother had volunteered to be videotaped conducting an examplary parent probe. Parents, after viewing the videotape of the parent and her child were first taught how to use the parent probe, and then practiced scoring the same videotaped example. Results were compared to ensure that all parents were recording ver batim responses.

Table 3 illustrates a parent probe which had been sent home for the parent to check and return. It exemplifies a probe in which the teacher provided the parent with questions designed to elicit the target language construction. The rationale for including probe questions was to enhance the parents' understanding of the construction being probed, and to make the procedure of conducting a probe simpler for the parents.

PARENT PROBE

Date: 1-26

Name of Student: A. P.

Construction(s): pronouns his, her she, he

Example: his coat, her ball She is jumping. He is running

You ask: Show A. a picture and ask, "What is she doing?"

Aaron said: She is putting water in the cup.

You ask: Show A. a picture and ask: "What is he doing?"

Aaron said: He is playing football.

You ask: Show A. an object belonging to a girl. Ask "Whose coat, (dress) is that?"

Aaron said: Her dress.

You ask: Show A. an object belonging to a boy and ask Aaron "Whose (object) is that?"

Aaron said: His airplane

Percentage of accuracy: 100%

A. didn't need any prompting. He is doing a lot more talking now than before.

Thank you,
Mrs P.

Results

Results from the teacher generalization checks were difficult to obtain. Since many of the field experiences followed a lecture/tour format, the resource person giving the tour talked "to" the group. Consequently, the children had little opportunity to use language. It was determined that the small sample of children's utterances was not sufficient to determine the extent of generalization in the community setting. It was decided that an intermediate step, such as a classroom discussion, or a sample of the child's spontaneous language would be a better indication of generalization.

One hundred percent (100%) of the parent probes sent home were returned. The total number of probes completed, returned, and charted was forty-eight (48). The results from the parent probes showed generalization of language constructions for some children, and little or no generalization for others. Eight of the children achieved better than 50% accuracy levels in two or more probes conducted. Two of the children, however, made little or no transfer of what they had learned in class to the home setting. As seen in Table 4, the generalization results indicate that 26 probes, or 54% of the total number of probes achieved 75% accuracy or better.

Discussion

When the parent probes were returned and examined, it was discovered that the two children with the lowest generalization scores had responded to their parents' questions using one or two word responses. The chance of the target

construction occurring, therefore, was nil. This result may have been avoided by allowing the parent to collect a more open-ended sample of spontaneous language, rather than using a question/answer format. One of the parents responded on a probe in reference to allowing her child to produce short responses. "I didn't realize that I was letting him get away with answering with one word. I guess we get lazy and allow him to be lazy too."

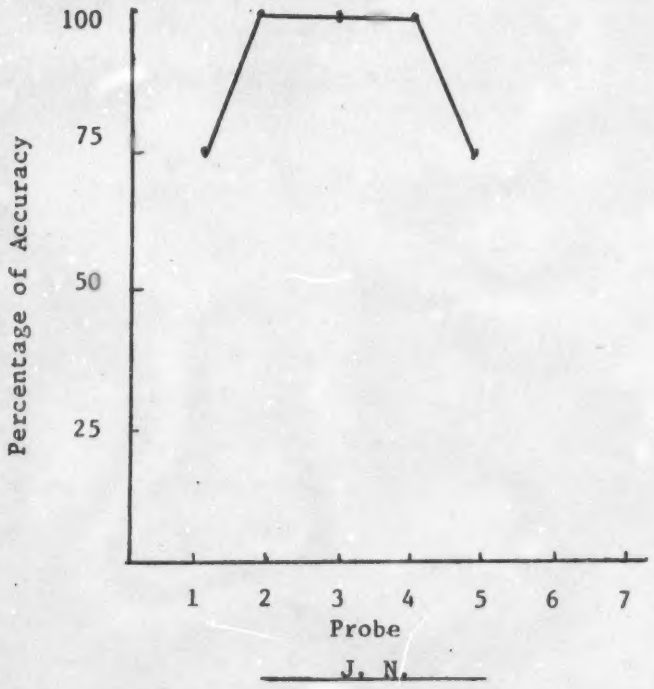
In summary, the parent probes had two effects. Not only did they give data on the extent of generalization of language, but they positively affected the parents' understanding of language and its importance to their children. They made the parent aware of what language skills were being taught in the classroom and of their own patterns of communication with their children.

The field experiences had a positive effect on the development of language. They provided the children with a much larger, more concrete view of their community. They exposed language delayed children to a wider vocabulary and increased their overall semantic repertoire.

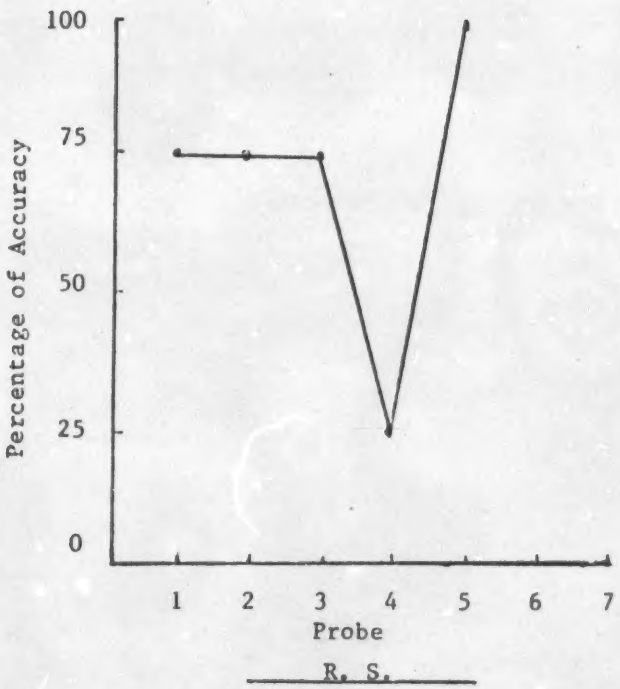
The cross-categorical nature of the language training was an effective means of language training. It reduced the amount of teacher time in arranging for field experiences, since teachers shared the work load in planning the field experiences, planning the controlled vocabulary, and ordering media. Furthermore, it was just as cost effective to provide transportation for two groups of children as one. The cross-categorical training approach, therefore, seemed to be an efficient means of providing realistic environmental experiences for severe language delayed children. In addition, it aided teachers in determining the extent to which children generalized language training to settings outside the classroom.

GENERALIZATION RESULTS

FROM PARENT PROBES



J. N.



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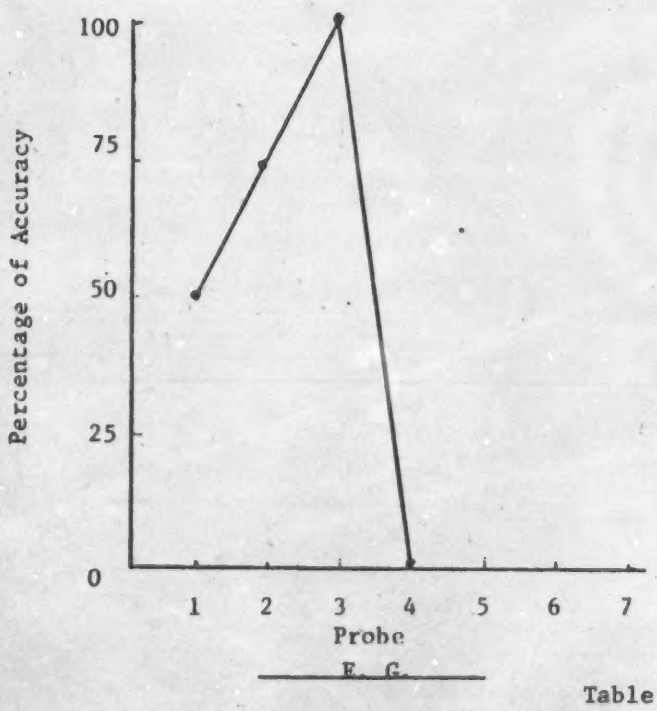
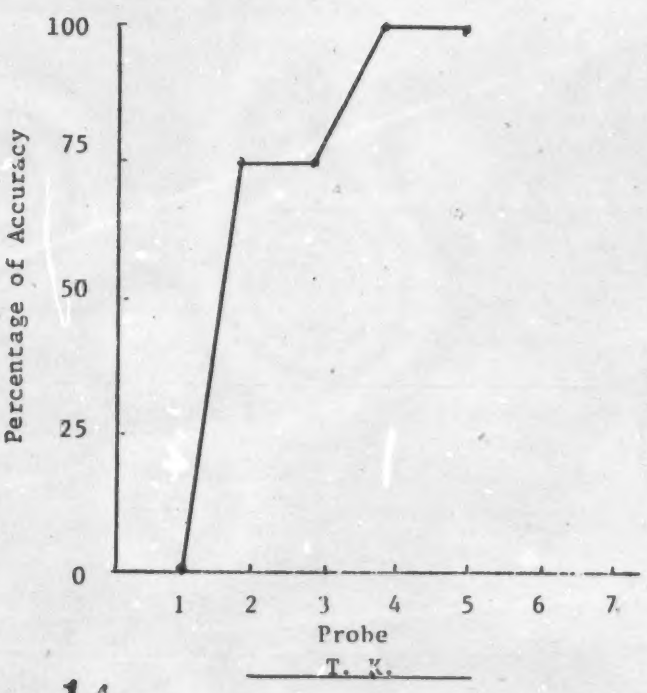


E. G.

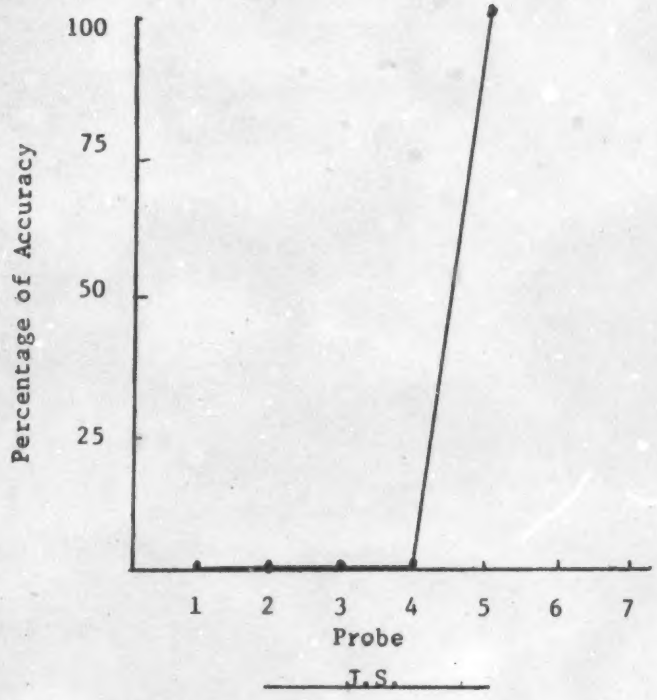


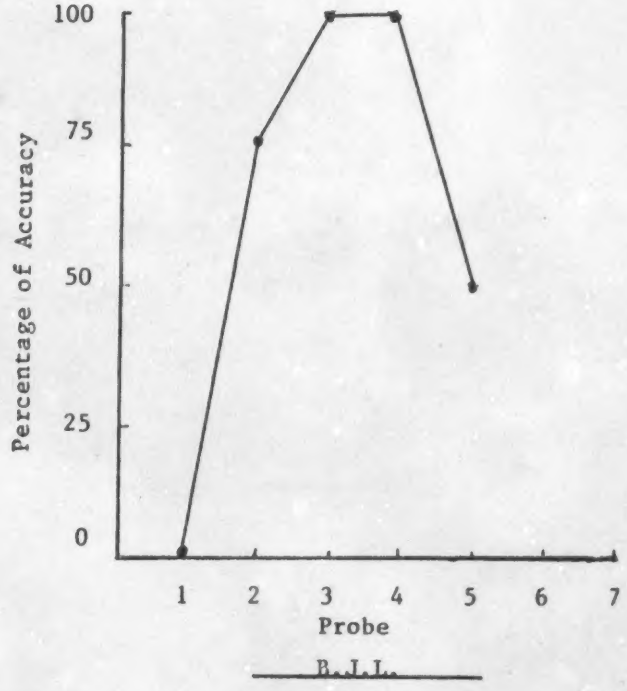
T. K.

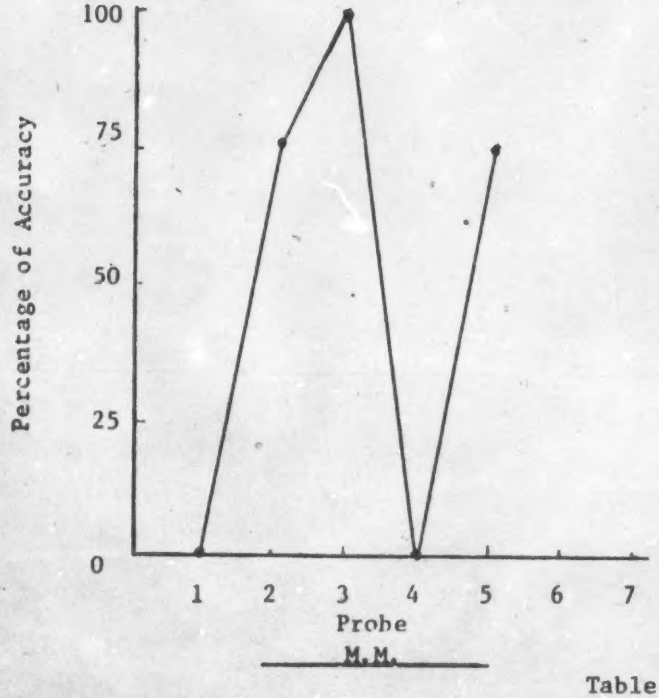
Table 4

GENERALIZATION RESULTS

FROM PARENT PROBES







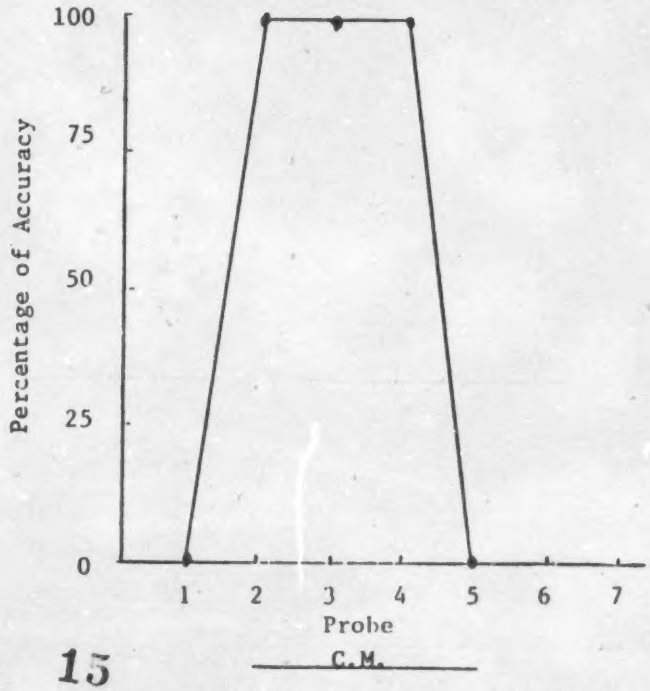


Table 4
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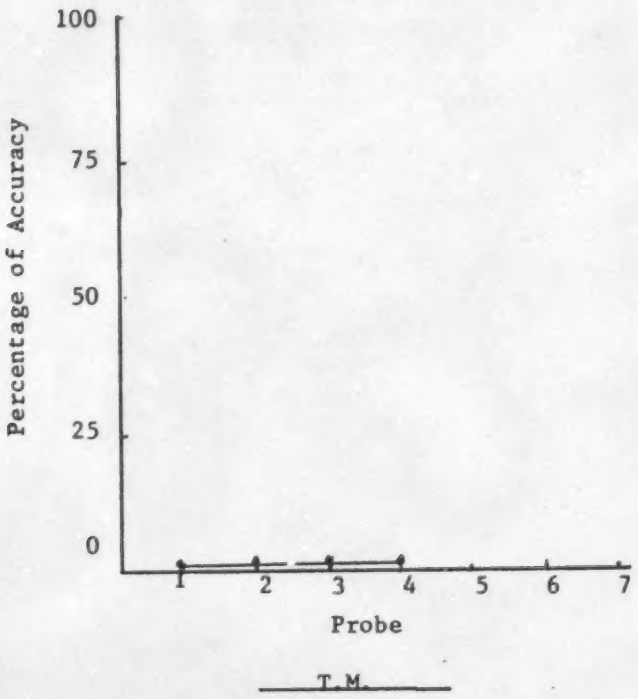
GENERALIZATION RESULTS

FROM PARENT PROBES



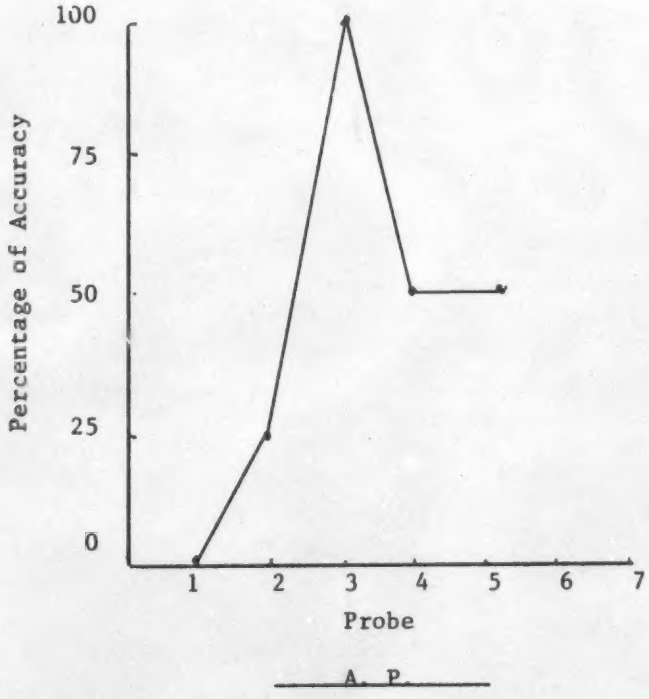


Table 4
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